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## **Joanie Phillip Named 2027-2028 State Teacher of the Year, Bringing “Show Up and Read” Platform Territorywide**

**VIDE named Joanie Phillip, a sixth-grade teacher at Ricardo Richards Elementary, as State Teacher of the Year during a Government House ceremony recognizing her and St. Thomas-St. John finalist Jessica Sibilly.**

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Joanie Phillip, a sixth-grade teacher at Ricardo Richards Elementary School, holds her State Teacher of the Year award after being named the 2027-2028 honoree by the Virgin Islands Department of Education. By. V.I. DEPT. OF EDUCATION

The V.I. Department of Education has named Joanie Phillip, a sixth-grade teacher at Ricardo Richards Elementary School, as the 2027-2028 State Teacher of the Year, recognizing her work in public education and her platform linking student attendance to literacy growth.

The announcement was made during a special recognition ceremony held Saturday, June 6 at Government House on St. Croix.

Ms. Phillip, the St. Croix District Teacher of the Year, was honored alongside Jessica Sibilly, the St. Thomas-St. John District Teacher of the Year. Both educators were recognized as the territory's top finalists for the honor and were celebrated for their commitment to student achievement, instructional excellence and public education in the Virgin Islands.

Education Commissioner Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington praised both finalists during the ceremony.

“This evening, we honored two educators who embody both leadership and heart. They lead with light by setting an example of excellence, innovation, and professionalism. They teach with heart by nurturing not only academic growth, but also character, confidence, and hope. The State Teacher of the Year represents the very best of our profession. We are honored to recognize Ms. Phillip as the 2027–2028 State Teacher of the Year and are incredibly proud of the impact she continues to make each and every day.”

The ceremony brought together guests from across the territory, including Lt. Governor Tregenza A. Roach; Senators Carla Joseph and Novelle Francis of the 36th Legislature; members of the governor's cabinet and senior staff; members of the Virgin Islands Board of Education; and members of VIDE's senior leadership team and staff.

Throughout the evening, both finalists received accolades, awards, gifts and tokens of appreciation for their dedication to educating and inspiring students in the Virgin Islands.

As State Teacher of the Year, Ms. Phillip will receive a sponsored cruise vacation. She was also formally crowned and presented with a sash during the ceremony, symbolizing her selection for the territory's highest teaching honor.

Ms. Phillip will now serve as an ambassador for the teaching profession, representing the Virgin Islands Department of Education at official events and initiatives. She will also advocate for her educational platform, “Show Up and Read.”

Ms. Phillip highlighted the connection between chronic absenteeism and lower student literacy.

“Students show greater engagement when they can connect attendance to their reading goals, track their progress, and take pride in their growth. I hope we continue to see attendance, not just as compliance, but as an issue of equity. Students deserve the chance to develop strong literacy skills that lay the foundation for future academic success. When students show up, literacy grows. When literacy grows, confidence follows. And when confidence follows, opportunities expand.”

VIDE said Ms. Phillip's recognition as State Teacher of the Year celebrates her contributions to public education and her commitment to shaping the future of the Virgin Islands.

The department also extended gratitude to the judges, sponsors, supporters, contributors and others who helped make the recognition ceremony possible.

“At the Virgin Islands Department of Education, we are public school proud and today, we are especially proud of Ms. Joanie Phillip. Congratulations on this extraordinary achievement!”

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